

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Depression Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 62

ROSE P. MORTON

Interviewed

by

Daniel M. Flood

on

January 29, 1976

## ROSE P. MORTON

Rose Young was born in Leetonia, Ohio in 1886, the daughter of Charles Young, a coal miner, and Catherine Becker. One of six children, she attended the local school to the eighth grade. After the death of her foster father in Zelienople, Pennsylvania where she had moved, Rose needed to make a living. She worked as an operator in the telephone office, first in the small town of Zelienople, later moving on to the city of Detroit, Michigan by 1911.

On June 8, 1918, Rose married William W. Morton, an anti-aircraft man in the United States Army. But shortly after the wedding, the groom was sent overseas during the World War. When her father's health began failing, Rose came back and stayed with the family, eventually making the move to Youngstown. Always wanting to further her education, Rose enrolled at the Youngstown Business College, studying bookkeeping, typing, and shorthand. This enabled her to get a job in six month's time. She held several positions, including Dictaphone work during the war. When her husband was discharged following the end of the war, the Mortons made their home in Youngstown. They had two children, Catherine Morton Pyers, and John Clair Morton. Rose, widowed in 1966, is presently living on Homestead Drive in Boardman, Ohio.

Terri Belloto  
July 19, 1979

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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YSU Depression Project

INTERVIEWEE: ROSE P. MORTON

INTERVIEWER: Daniel M. Flood

SUBJECT: Depression

DATE: January 29, 1976

F: This is an interview with Rose P. Morton at 83 Homestead Drive, Apartment One, in Boardman for the Youngstown State University, Depression Project by Dan Flood at Mrs. Morton's home on January 29, 1976 at approximately 7:30 p.m.

Let's go back and start right at the very beginning. Do you want to tell a little bit about your own background, where you were born and when you were born?

M: My mother died when I was six years old. My father had very ill health, that is, my real father. He had six children and he couldn't hardly keep them, he had asthma so bad. He had worked in the coal mines. So, a distant relative of ours was at my mother's funeral, so she took me home with her. And she had ten children of her own--that didn't make any difference. They lived in the country, [Beaver County] and they were well-to-do farmers. So she kept me there and there was another distant relative who lived in Zelienople, [Pennsylvania] and they were up in years and they wanted to adopt a child and they wanted me. And so, this lady who had taken me home with her said it wasn't up to her, it was up to my dad, in Leetonia. So they wrote back and forth and of course, my dad--he was ill and he didn't get around very much so he just said, "It's up to them." So then they decided they would take me into Zelienople where these old people were and I was about, almost eight years old by that time. I

had lived in the country with those people. I went in there and I didn't like it. And they were old, you know, they were almost sixty. See, nowadays, they wouldn't get by with that. So then they took me over there at Zelienople and I cried for two days, never quit. So my foster father then got a horse [from] the livery stable and took me back out to the country [Beaver County]. That was in July. Then he sort of asked me if I wouldn't try it again when school started and I guess I promised I would. And I went back there. So, I was there then awhile and then the school started and they decided to adopt me. And they did. Well, I lived with them then while I was adopted and when I was twelve years old--I was eight years old when I went there--and when I was twelve years old, why my foster mother died. So by the time I was twelve years old, I had lost two mothers.

Well, then of course, my father was pretty well up in years, but he kept me. And I was always scared to death when I lived there because my foster mother was like somebody who was retarded, I'd say. And my foster father, he used to go uptown and visit with the old fellows there. And my mother and I were there alone and she would sit and tell me one ghost story after another until I got scared to death.

F: She'd scare you to death!

M: I still think of those stories, although, I don't believe in it, but I was afraid to go into any room without a light or anything and I still am a little bit that way. (laughter) She just was that way and she believed all that. But anyway, she died then. I couldn't take anybody home, she'd embarrass me so, all the time. But my father was so different.

But they said that they had a child and it died when it was only, well, I guess a few days old. And after that she became sort of retarded. Something affected her health and that was the reason she was like that. But anyway, it would have been a hard life but my foster father was very good to me and he was a bright man.

Well, it was an adoption, but as I said, my daughter and my granddaughter, Velma, think that was a terrible thing--you know, to have me adopted. But, it wasn't like an adoption nowadays. They would take me, that is, my foster father would take me back to

Leetonia to visit and they would come back and forth. It was more like, well it was just a transfer you might say. So I stayed with my foster father and I was twenty-one years old when he died.

F: How many years of schooling did you go through?

M: I only got to my eighth grade and that was not my fault. I wanted an education so bad and I got along in school so well. When I got through with the eighth grade he had a sister who came to live with them while she was a widow and she didn't like it because I was there. He had some property and they wanted to get his property. She tried everything to get me out of there because my foster father told me. When she didn't get to her aim, accomplished, why she got mad and left. And of course, my father kept me there and I took care of him when he died. He left me everything he had. He had two houses and he had another house in Ellwood City which a nephew of his had bought it and my father didn't know enough--he took a mortgage--he didn't know enough to put that mortgage on record. His nephew got at it and gave another party a mortgage on that house, a first mortgage which would have thrown ours out. Just out of his own goodwill he decided he'd give me half of the money that he owed. He owed it to me then. But the property at that time was real cheap when he sold it to him for about eleven hundred dollars, so he paid me five hundred and that's all I got. They told me that I better take that on account of him doing that it would throw our mortgage out so maybe he would never pay anything. That's the way it went.

Then, I never had done any work--only kept house for my foster father. After he died then I got a little job there in the telephone office in Zelienople.

F: Oh, yes? How did that come about? Was there training that you had before that?

M: Well, I wanted to work. I needed some extra money. My father didn't have much cash and after the funeral expenses were paid and all--he had quite a little bit of land around his house there and made such big gardens and everything and that cut down our living expenses so, of course, I couldn't do that after he was gone--I needed money.

F: What year was this?

M: What year was that? I was twenty-one years old when he died and I went there to work about three years later. I was about twenty-three when I went to work there. Now I will be ninety years old in August.

F: Really?

M: Yes. This coming August, I'll be ninety.

F: I want to know, what was it like working as a telephone operator?

M: Oh, at the telephone office I loved it!

F: What was like, a typical day there? How was it set up? Were there a lot of people in there?

M: It was the drop system and of course a small town like that, you knew about everybody and you almost knew all the numbers by heart. I worked there one year but I left because, the way it started that I left was: these people that had lived in my father's house for a long time borrowed some money from me. I had a little bit of cash and they borrowed the money from me and they couldn't pay it and I, of course, had signed the note. This man that worked in the bank there, [as clerk] took the money out of his own pocket and paid it till I would get the money. So they wanted me to come out there and stay for awhile and get a job out there and fork my money out, which I did. I quit the job in Zelianople and went and got a job in Detroit--the same kind of a job at the telephone--and I stayed there until my money had run out.

F: What were you making at the time, do you remember, as an operator?

M: In Detroit I made about forty dollars a month. But in Zelianople, I didn't make that much, only about thirty. Wages weren't up then. You didn't get much. Even a stenographer didn't get very much.

My education was only eighth grade but I always wanted to go to school. My father wouldn't let me go to high school, my foster father.

F: Why?

M: No! He just thought I ought to stay home and help him more. He was lonely.

F: He thought the woman's job was at home?

M: Oh, I cried. I'd see the kids going to school and really, I never forgave him for that because I wanted to go to school so bad.

When I left Detroit, I came back home again. By that time I had given up my house there and sold all my stuff and stayed with a family that lived right across the street from us. He was a doctor. So then I thought I wanted to be a nurse. I didn't know what to do with myself, to tell the truth. By that time I was about twenty-six years old.

I went to put in applications at different hospitals in Pennsylvania there and I got a job there as a nurse, in training at the West Penn in Pittsburgh. I was there one year and I got real mad there one day at one of the nurses. I thought I was being imposed upon too much. I still had this income from the houses and all and I thought, oh, I was foolish to do that--to work so hard and they had just moved into this new [hospital] building and they didn't have enough nurses. Maybe we should be on duty at seven in the morning and quit at seven at night, but we never got that far. Maybe we'd be lucky if we got off at ten. Well, it was just too much work. And I didn't like it. I thought I didn't need to do that. (laughter) So I just quit! Then I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to do.

In the meantime, my own people, my own sister was living in Leetonia and my own dad was living with her and she was married. My dad was so sick that winter with this asthma so she wanted me to come home with them awhile and stay with them. In the meantime, my brother-in-law had worked in Leetonia there and he got fired. So they decided he was going to try to get a job in Youngstown, which he did. So they wanted me to come to Youngstown with them. My father, of course, got over that bad spell. He had a lot of bad spells. He went with us.

So then I thought, well, I didn't have much education but I'd like to go to Business College after I had quit the nursing. (laughter) I didn't know about the colleges. One day my sister and I were downtown in Youngstown here and she saw a sign on Federal Street there where it said a business college had just opened. She said, "Let's go up there and find out what that is." So we went up

there and behold you, when we went up it was the man we knew that had a business college in Beaver Falls, [Pennsylvania]. Some of my cousins had gone to him and it was just like somebody from home. I told him the whole thing.

F: Where was that located now, the business college?

M: His name?

F: No, the business college itself.

M: It was the Youngstown Business College at the time. They used to be under Hall, I guess, but when he took it over, he called it the Youngstown Business College. They had individual classes, you could go as fast as you wanted to. He didn't have very many pupils at the time. So I started. I told him I would start.

I didn't start when I told him because I had trouble with my eyes. I got a whole lot of sties on my eyes, one after another. So, he came out to the house to see why I hadn't started. I told him my eyes were bad, so he said, "Well, whenever the eyes are better, why you come down."

I got started in the Fall. There were only a few pupils at the time and he had a shorthand teacher there, too. I was only there just a little while and his shorthand teacher got sick. He came to me and he said, "You've got to go down and teach the class down at the college, there at the business college." I said, "Why, Professor Butcher, I can't do that! I don't know enough." He said, "Yes, you can. You have to do it. I need somebody and I need them bad. They'll understand. It'll only be for a couple of weeks." So I went down. I had the nerve to do it. I went down there and taught those kids and really, we had a circus with it.

I took the course; I didn't graduate from it, but I took the typing and studied with the shorthand at home and in six months, I was ready for a job. Then he got me one job after another. The first job I ever had was with the Bradstreet's. When I went in there that day, this guy said to me, "Had you ever run the blind typewriter?" I said, "I never saw one." Well he said, "That's what you have to do." Do you know what they're like? The work is underneath. You have to lift up a carriage to see your



work. I said, "Well, I'll take it." So I took that and I worked there one year. I didn't think I was getting enough money. (laughter) I asked him one day for more money and he didn't give it to me. So I went back to Mr. Butcher, where I went to college, and I told him about it. He said, "I can get you another job." So he got me a job for Wilcox.

F: Excuse me for interrupting, but any time you come across any jobs that you had or money that you could tie in, it would help.

M: You want me to give you the money.

F: Yes, if you can.

M: Well, I went to have an interview with him and he really hired me to do the shorthand and typing and [it was] more money, about ten dollars a month more. But, I didn't like it. They were Jewish people. I don't know what nationality you are, but they were Jewish and I didn't like them.

I asked Mr. Johnson--the name of the man for the Bradstreet's--if I didn't like it down there if I could come back. He said yes. So, I went back to Bradstreet's. Well it wasn't much money, but I got my experience there in the first place. He said, "Yes, you can come back. I didn't think you'd like it down there amongst a bunch of Jews." So that was it.

I worked there another six months and then Mr. Butcher, I went back to him again. He got me every job I ever had. He got me another job, at the Youngstown telephone office, but it wasn't at the board. It was stenographer, shorthand, and typing. I worked there about a year and a half.

My sister had moved from where she was over to another part in Youngstown. She said they're needing a girl at the G.F.--that's the General Fireproofing Company--and they thought that would be nice for me to have that job because I could walk to work from there. She didn't want it but she said it would be a good place to work. She said, "We'll help you write the . . .

F: Résumé?

M: Yes, and I wrote the letter. By that time I had a

vacation coming. I had a girlfriend living in Erie and I went to see her. While I was there, they had called my sister up. I was living at my sister's.

F: Did you own a car at the time, that you went to Erie in?

M: No, I never owned a car in my life. No, I never did. My husband did after I was married, but I never did. I never had a car, no. I never learned to drive. I could walk to work.

Instead of typing, it was typing all right, but it wasn't shorthand. It was Dictaphone work. It was during the war.

F: World War I.

M: And they wanted me for that because they said it saved time. The fellows could dictate any time and then you could just write your letters.

F: Do you remember much about the war?

M: My husband went to war and was married just before he went overseas. That was another experience I had.

F: This was right before World War I, when you started working at G.F.? Then did you get married right after that?

M: Yes. Yes, I went there in August.

F: Of what year?

M: My husband left for the service on December 13, [1917]. But I had gone with him four years and we had decided to get married. Then when the war came along, we thought we'd wait until after the war. When it came time for him to go overseas, he sent me a telegram at work at the G.F. to come up there to New Jersey where he was as soon as I could.

He had a younger brother. He was living in Youngstown, working there, so he went with me. When I was up there, why then he said, "I think I want to get married before I go over." He said he'd go and talk to the commanding officer. So he talked to the commanding officer and Bill wanted a whole week off. We wanted to go up to Coney Island. But he said,

"Here's the thing: If you take that time off, we're scheduled to leave here any hour. You'll lose your place here in this company. If you want to get married, you can get married here, you don't have to go to Coney Island. You can get married right here." So we decided then we'd get married. This was on a Saturday. Yes, it was on a Saturday, the day we were married. The trouble we had, though, the guy that had charge of the licenses was away. He wasn't there so we had to find somebody else to take his place. Finally, we found somebody!  
(Laughter) Oh, I'm telling you, it was something! Some time we had!

My husband said, "Well, I think though, that you want to be married by a Lutheran minister because you've always been a Lutheran. We ought to find a Lutheran minister." We hunted around and Bill had to be back that evening down to the camp where they were. [It was] about eight o'clock when we were married. We found a little Lutheran minister. Bill always said he was too short for any good! (Laughter) We found this man and he said, "Well, you'll have to have witnesses. My wife could be one, but you have to have two." So just then, he looked out the window--the minister did--and said, "There goes two GIs. Call them in, they'll be a witness." So, he did. He called them in and they were our witnesses. I only saw my husband for about one half hour after that.

F: And then he left?

M: Yes. I wanted to go back to New York to get my train home because he said, "I have to be right back at the camp."

F: Well, he was shipped out overseas then?

M: That next morning, he was on his way.

F: Where to? Where'd he go?

M: He went over to Germany [and France].

F: Did he write you during the war?

M: Oh, he landed in France, at France. Then I got the card when the ship had landed. That was in June. We married on June 8, 1918. The World War was over in November. He wasn't discharged from there until

the following March. He came home and by that time I was still working at the G.F.

F: Did he write you about the wars during the time though?

M: Oh, yes. He wrote all the time.

F: Do you remember any comments that he made while over there?

M: Oh, yes. They weren't allowed to tell too much as to where they were. Now my son was in the war, too, afterwards; the Second World War. He didn't tell too much about the war but [my husband] was in the antiaircraft. That's the, what do you call it?

F: Shooting down the planes.

M: Yes, that's what he was in. Before he was coming home, he said to me, "I'll be discharged most any time," and he wanted me to meet him at Cleveland. I said to the lady who was in charge of our department, "Should I quit my job now or shall I just keep on working or what'll I do?"

She said, "Just do whatever you think. If you want to work afterwards, you can." This day, I had gotten a letter the day before and Bill had said he guessed he'd be discharged most any time now. This morning when I got up, my sister said to me, "If I were you I wouldn't go to work today. I just have sort of a hunch that Bill will be sending you word to come to Cleveland to meet him." I didn't go and sure enough, that's what happened. I got a telegram and he said to meet him at the Hotel Cleveland. He was discharged that day and he got out that night in the evening and went on the train.

F: Was it hard for him to find a job when he came home or did he have a job already?

M: No. He had his job that he had before. He got his job back that he was working at that time at the U. S. Steel. He worked there for a long time. I never got my story finished about him leaving his job and that he didn't have a job when . . .

F: We'll catch that as we go up into the 1930s.

M: He worked there for quite awhile. They held that

job opened, that is, and when he'd come back, that was the understanding: he'd have his job. And he got his job back. He worked there and they had several strikes there and one thing and another. He used to work at the roundhouse at the railroad, which he did too. He'd quit a couple of times and work there and then worked with the Sheet & Tube, and then always landed back at the U. S. Steel. That's where he was working when he quit his job that time just before the Depression.

F: Now as you're going through the 1920 period, do you remember much about the "Roaring Twenties" and the different dance crazes?

M: Well, I don't know. Things were altogether different. People dressed a little differently and things like that. I don't know anything much about it.

F: The 1930s would be primarily what you know quite a bit about.

M: Yes. When all the people dressed differently; they wore their dresses so much longer and all that. I could remember when they first started wearing oxfords. The doctor, and everybody said you'd get rheumatism by wearing oxfords like that.

F: Oh, really?

M: Yes. I remember one girl [wore them] I think before anybody else wore these oxfords out at work and everybody made a big fuss about it.

I didn't go back to work anymore. Then of course, we got a little place that had just furnished rooms and we lived there for about six months.

Then we bought a house. I sold my property I had in Zelienople then, the one place.

F: Did you get much for the property at the time?

M: No. I had sold the other one before when I wanted to go to Business College. I had two houses there in Zelienople, right side by side. The one man was living in my house at the time when I went down to see about selling it. I needed some money to go to school, although he didn't charge me hardly anything. I don't think he charged more than twenty-five dollars for my whole course because he was so

appreciative because that whole thing I did--went down there and helped out at the college. (laughter) I didn't know very much but I just had the nerve to do it and he wanted me to do it. So I did.

I sold that house and I stayed with my sister and I paid my board. The man that bought the house bought it on payment and I had that money coming in then. Well I had saved quite a little bit. Then during that war if they wanted us to buy liberty bonds--I don't know whether you knew about that or not. They called it like the bonds now. They just called it liberty bonds and they wanted the people that worked for them to take these liberty bonds. We took the liberty bonds and then we got a raise in our wages as much as our liberty bond was.

F: Oh, really?

M: Yes. Oh, they were very nice people.

F: Come to think about it, at General Fireproofing, I remember seeing some pamphlets. Now didn't they have the men down there do exercises?

M: Oh, yes. We used to have people come into our office and we had a special hour where we took exercises, health exercises, the ladies. In our department, that Dictaphone department, we had all girls. There were seventeen of us there and then upstairs, there were men in the other departments and all over the place. But our department was only girls. Some of them had to go upstairs and take dictation. They didn't all work for the Dictaphones, just certain ones. But that's what they wanted at the last part of the war because they had saved time for them.

We bought this place after my husband came home. Then I sold the other house. We lived in furnished rooms and we sold the other house and we bought this place on George Street. It was a pretty nice street when we first went there, but the only thing was, there was one colored family that lived down the street. Well, we didn't live there very long and the lady next door to us sold her house to colored people.

We then had the second baby. We sold that house and we bought this house on Boston Avenue.

In the meantime, my husband's people came to live with us. That was another thing we had to do because Bill's father had--he wasn't well--gangrene on his foot and when they first came to Youngstown they put him in the hospital and they were going to take his leg off. But my mother-in-law didn't want that so she took care of him. She got some kind of salve and stuff and took care of him. Those toes on his foot all fell off and it was just like an amputation. It didn't go any farther but I think at the last he lived about three years after that. I think at the last that gangrene was sort of going through his system.

F: Yes.

M: Then he died and she was quite a bit younger than he was.

F: So you kept her then?

M: Yes. They stayed with us for three years. There were three boys but of course, the one, he didn't do anything for his folks. But the one family, the one son that lived right below us, they were the instigators of coming to Youngstown and giving up their farm. My mother-in-law said she couldn't live there anymore. Their house was too bad and they'd have to do something. So the other brother, his wife insisted on coming over and living with them. They would keep boarders together because my mother-in-law wasn't so old. She was only in her sixties. They had another younger boy and he married and the marriage didn't turn out good. He just finally disappeared. We never did find out what happened to him.

F: What happened as you were coming up toward the stock market crash in 1929?

M: My husband was at the U. S. Steel and this man came and told him about this job for this man in Beaver Falls. He thought it'd be just the thing but I was opposed to it but Bill thought that it'd be all right. He said, "Even if it doesn't turn out, I could always get you a job, another job." That was fine but then we didn't know about the Depression. If Bill would have known about that, he could have gotten a leave of absence instead of just quitting. The job didn't turn out for this man. He had to go to Mr. Creighton for money to pay Bill's wages.

Mr. Creighton came and told Bill, "I don't think this is going to turn out." We were just about ready to sell our house on Boston Avenue and move down there. He said, "Don't do it. It'll never turn out." Then he said to Bill, "Do you want to go back at the U. S. Steel if you can come back or do you want to go someplace else?" Bill hated to go back quite so shortly after that, so he said, "No, I'd rather go somewhere else."

He got him a job at the Republic and the job was a good job. He got a lot of overtime. We had more money than we'd had for a long, long time.

F: That was in the late 1920s then, right?

M: The crash came and he was a new man and they had to leave him go. He couldn't get back because they weren't allowed to hire them and he had no job. Had no job. And we had no money because it just was one of those things you just didn't plan on.

F: What was it like at home?

M: Here's what I wanted to tell you about the Depression: It wasn't very long--well, we owed a little bit of money and one man came, a friend of his, right away, almost instantly, and asked him if he needed some help. He said, "I could loan you three hundred dollars if you want it." So Bill said, "All right, I'll take it." That helped out a little bit. And then we had to cash in some of our insurance policies to get the money. Of course, we got some food from the city and they shut off our gas; they shut off the electric.

F: The city did? Well, that's public utilities.

M: The city did because we couldn't pay the bill. We had no money coming in and so they finally wanted to shut our water off. And they did. Now here's the thing I wanted to tell you. This is the story I want you to hear: My husband's brother was living with us awhile. He was working at the U. S. Steel too, but they only got about two days a week. Maybe some of the men that had jobs, maybe one week they'd get a little more, and less the next week.

He was living with us and he was home that day. I thought I never saw my husband so nervous in all my



life. He knew this guy was coming out to shut off the water. He was a great big guy. He was a foreigner. He really was a foreigner. So when he came out, Bill had given his brother instructions what to do. "Now," he said, "When this guy comes out, you go down in the basement." He had a part that belonged to an automobile--a pump. He said, "You pump that water out that's in there, that heating thing, and pump all that water there and pump it with all your might into that pipe that goes into the outside faucet there." I guess I'm telling it all right.

When the man came to see if the shutoff was in the back yard, Bill was thinking he'd never find it. "Oh, yes," he said, "I can find it. I have a magnet. I'll find it." So Bill went with him and he found it and he shut it off. He walked up with the man till he came to the faucet and he turned it on and the water just spurting out there just real good! (laughter) He said to the guy, "You didn't shut that water off."

"No," he said, "It comes out so fast." Bill said, "You turned it the wrong way." He said, "That's right, I did." So he went back and he turned it the other way and then, of course, Elmer, his brother, didn't pump it anymore and the water didn't come anymore. He said, "No, it's shut off now." He went home, (laughter) and we had water all the time! We lived there about three or four years in that house. (laughter) We told it to our dentist and he nearly died over it. He said, "If that isn't the funniest thing I ever heard of!" (laughter)

F: Now, you had kids in the house, right?

M: Yes.

F: What about the electric? The electricity and the other things were turned off too, then?

M: Well, sure. It was terrible. The man next door was a contractor and he wasn't home all the time. He had jobs in New York and different places but they had a good living. He made quite a bit of money and he said, "I'll fix that electric. I'll put a wire across there so you'll have electric." The company found it out and they made him take it down. They said we're not allowed to do that. So we didn't have the electric.

The gas was shut off because we owed too much. Elmer, his brother, didn't have enough money at the time to pay for the gas. Here's what happened: One morning, our neighbor loaned us an oil stove. You had to know just how to light that thing and this morning, I don't know what happened, but I lit it and the flames just oh, [went] clear to the ceiling! I was scared to death! My husband was home and I called him. He came out and he took that stove, blaze and all, and threw it out over in the empty lot next to us; lifted the whole thing, fire and all! (laughter) So that was the end of the stove.

I don't know how we did then for a couple of days but anyhow, we got the gas paid. I don't know how it got paid anymore, I can't remember that, but we got the gas paid. So we had the gas.

Of course, for food you could get all the flour you needed if you wanted to bake. I baked all the bread and all that stuff. We really never went hungry.

F: Wait a minute, now. If you were making bread, how did you bake it?

M: Well, we got the gas turned on, yes, and I could make bread. Before that we couldn't do too much with our flour because it was too dear. The little oil stove, we used to bake with that but it was slow working, just a little wee oven. So that wasn't so good. When I got that, I could bake pretty good bread. Elmer--that was the brother--was a pretty good eater. But he didn't have much money. His wife was mad, always thinking he had a few dollars coming, he should never give us a dollar of anything and he never did give us any money. But, he bought the groceries. The trouble is, he'd buy something and then he wouldn't buy anything to go with it that you could make anything out of it. (laughter) Oh, no, he didn't know how to do! Maybe he'd buy a head of cabbage and maybe he wouldn't have a bit of vinegar or anything to fix slaw or anything! Just the head of cabbage! (laughter) Oh, I used to get so mad at him!

He didn't have hardly anything but his wife, she was keeping a close tab on him. He had to send his wife and his daughter over to the country seat for them to live because he couldn't pay the rent and the

utilities or nothing on what he was making. So they stayed over there during the Depression. But he had to give up the house.

F: Over where now?

M: In Pennsylvania it was over by Sandy Lake. They had a farm there, her folks.

F: Oh, I see. They went back home and they separated because of the Depression then?

M: Not legally. That's all they could do or either starve to death, because we couldn't give them any food. We just gave them a room we had there, and he'd buy food, things, to eat. But as I said, maybe I couldn't fix anything! (laughter)

F: Velma said something about pies in the furnace or something?

M: Oh, yes. It was Thanksgiving time and at that time, we didn't have the gas. It was Thanksgiving and we didn't have gas, we were still using that oil stove. Bill said, "We're going to have some pumpkin pies for Thanksgiving."

And coal, we nearly always had coal. But sometimes they didn't want to give you the coal either. The city had made arrangements for that. If you run your time over a little bit, why they didn't want to give it to you. Anyhow, we had the coal.

He said, "I'm going to fix that. You fix the pies." And he fixed up the coal, real hot coal, in the furnace, nice and clear, and put the pies in there. Then that Thanksgiving, the people brought us a basket and they had two pumpkin pies in it. And the neighbors above us gave us a pumpkin pie.

F: You had all kinds of pumpkin pies! (laughter)

M: Yes, that's true! (laughter) Oh, my, the things that happened!

Of course, this house wasn't paid for we had on Boston Avenue. We couldn't make our regular payments, although, when my husband got his bonus that time, he made some payments and then he cashed in some of his insurance. We went to the bank and Bill told him, "I'm going to give you

three hundred dollars. You won't foreclose then, will you?"

He said, "No." But he did. He foreclosed.

F: He foreclosed on the house?

M: He foreclosed and he said that wasn't near enough money.

F: Wait a minute now. You gave him three hundred dollars?

M: Yes. One time, in one lump sum, he gave him three hundred dollars.

F: And they still foreclosed on the loan?

M: Oh, yes. He said, "That didn't hurt you any," I don't know if Bill told him what he did. He cashed the insurance and he didn't think that was anything of a payment. Well, the man wasn't working. Once in a while, Bill got a little job, extra job for people [who] needed a little bit of plumbing done and things like that. Then one time he got a job at the Republic. That was a sort of a branch of this man that worked in Beaver Falls. He got a job there for several months one time.

F: It wasn't anything steady, right.

M: Yes. Then the man came and he said, "You've got to move out of here." I think it was in March. I said, "I'm not moving out of here in March because our kids are in school. I'm going to stay till the term is out, in June."

"All right then," he said, "If you're not out of here by the first of July, your stuff's going to go out on the street."

F: Was this one of the local banks right in town here?

M: Oh, yes. The Home Savings & Loan. Then on the first day of July, we got out of that house. The man that lived next door to us was well acquainted with the man that got our house. Do you know what he got our house for? For twenty-seven hundred dollars. And that's about all we owed on it. Our house--after we left it, when he made us get out of there--stood empty from July till the next March.

It stood empty there.

F: What was your address on Boston Avenue?

M: Something seven. I forget the number.

F: Do you remember where it was located? Toward Glenwood [Avenue]?

M: East Boston Avenue. Do you know where the Taft School is? Right near the Taft School. It was only about a block away from there.

F: Those homes go twenty thousand dollars now.

M: We paid six thousand for it. They got an upstairs finished. We had that done afterwards. My sister came and lived with us awhile. They had sort of hard times and they paid for that so we could have that. And the bank got that, too.

We had a cousin who was an artist, a good painter. He painted our house all over and [it was] real fancy painting. The house wasn't really a fancy house but it was cute, it was a bungalow and had this upstairs. It had instead of a square, it was sort of an oval thing and he painted flowers on there and all around our dining room with grapes and things. He really fixed it up nice. And that man getting that house for twenty-seven hundred dollars! That was a fact because he told Mr. Kaiser, our neighbor, that's all he paid for it. He was a teller at the bank.

F: Given to their own.

M: If they'd left us stay there, we could have paid for that house because we had to pay rent afterwards.

F: What did you do in June then? In June, you just went out and looked around for apartments?

M: June?

F: Yes, when you were thrown out of your house.

M: We had this apartment before we had to get out because in March he wanted us to leave and we wouldn't. We knew we didn't have to get out till July. We had that time so he found this little

apartment through a friend of his. Bill didn't have any money so this friend of his that he used to work with at the roundhouse took him up to this widow woman who owned this little apartment. It was empty, that is, the lower part was. Then we got the house. Bill had six dollars that day and he handed it to Mrs. Millsop. She said, "No, you keep your six dollars. You'll get a job one of these days and then you can pay me."

Well, Bill did get this little job at Republic and it lasted for quite a little while. We got all our rent paid up and then, of course, that job was done. Then we got behind again with our rent. After we got started again, that's when he got the bonus. He got the bonus--it was five hundred dollars--and Bill paid the man he got the three hundred dollars from at the time and paid up our rent we owed her. Soon as we got our rent paid up, she raised the rent right away!

Then we got a chance to move out of there and we moved into the terrace. There were eight terraces there and one was going to be empty. They had a long waiting list and the lady that lived there, I guess, sort of spoke up for us. So, we got it. We lived there in that terrace for twenty-two years.

During the Depression my husband couldn't work when he got back to the U. S. Steel again. He only worked there several years. I forget how many years it was and then he got down sick with this MS--multiple sclerosis--and that was the end of his work. He was ill for eighteen years before he died and I took care of him myself.

F: Did you collect on the workmen's compensation at the time?

M: He didn't have any, no. After awhile he got a pension from the government. Bill was a soldier, you know. He got, first it was only about fifty dollars, fifty or sixty dollars. Then they gradually raised it up a little bit and when you were completely disabled then they raised it still more. And in late years, he got the pension from the government and we got along pretty well that way.

By that time my son got a job as soon as he was out of high school, at the U. S. Steel, and he worked there twenty-two years. What happened to him: He's

not working either now. He worked there twenty-two years and he had a good job. They just seemed to push him up, push him up and then they cleaned the whole thing out several years ago and left, I don't know how many of the supervisors and all go. They gave them their termination pay. Clair was fixing all of his books and everything together and thought he'd leave. They asked him to stay so he stayed. He worked there one year but what he found out then, right away when they asked him to stay, it was the deduction of three hundred and fifty a month. And the people that were under him before were over him. It just was preying on his mind. He couldn't stand it. He was going really into a nervous breakdown.

He worked one year and his wife could see that there was something terribly wrong with him. So one day, he just told them he was quitting. He couldn't take it anymore. He said that they were just so snotty about it, that is, the people that were working there. The people that were under him were over him and they'd throw the papers maybe at him, just in a careless way. He couldn't take it, so he quit. He called me up and asked me if we were going to have lunch or something, and I said, "How come you're home?" He said, "I quit." That was at the U. S. Steel after he'd been there twenty-two years, over twenty-two years.

F: This was your son?

M: Yes. My husband was ill, then [and] couldn't work.

F: Was this during the Depression?

M: No. The Depression was all over, long ago.

F: Let's go back to that Depression.

M: We lived in that little apartment then and by that time we lived there three years. But about the time the three years were up, my husband got back to the U. S. Steel and we moved there. Then, of course, he wasn't ill. That's where he got several years in. But we thought we'd get on our feet again. And then he got sick with this MS.

That was it and that was the end of his work. He didn't work for eighteen years.

- F: Do you remember about Franklin Delano Roosevelt?  
Do you remember much about him?
- M: Oh, yes. I know the banks closed and he opened them that time.
- F: Did you like the man?
- M: We thought he was all right. But I don't think he was though now, since I hear more about it. I'm not much read up on that, but I don't know. I think he did a lot of harm.
- F: In what ways?
- M: I don't know. It seems that things weren't any too good after that for a long time, although at the time, why he did open up the banks. My daughter was taking violin lessons and they had a recital, that is during Franklin Roosevelt . . .
- F: Roosevelt's term of office.
- M: Yes. [She] was taking violin lessons and had a little recital at this lady's house. She said, "If any of you people know of anyone who has money in the bank, they'd better get it out because they're going to close."

We didn't have any, but Catherine came home and told us. There was a lady we had furnished rooms with when we were first married, had quite a bit of money, and I told her about it and she didn't believe it. But it was true. They closed it and she couldn't get her money. Her husband and she were separated--they weren't divorced but were just separated. He just simply left. It was on account of religion. He died and she wanted to go to the funeral and wanted to draw out some money. They couldn't even get the money for that and they had lots of money.

Yes, that happened. I remember that about the people that if you did have money, you couldn't get it; that is, maybe people would help you out even if they could have, but they couldn't. We did get a lot of food given to us at different times from people we knew and from the church, and so on. I can say: we never went hungry. But then it wasn't the same. You had to make ends meet.



F: Do you remember some of the meals you used to make?

M: One thing we cooked a lot that I loved was mush.  
(laughter) I loved the fried mush! I'll never forget, it took so long! We still had that little oil stove then. We were cooking that mush and my brother-in-law just [had] come. He'd say, "Pass up the mush, please. Pass it up." We couldn't fry it quick enough! (laughter)

F: He'd eat it!

M: Yes, he did. That was one thing. Then we had two ladies that lived across the street from us. They had quite a big garden. They raised all kinds of vegetables and everything. They used to bring us loads of stuff like that--vegetables.

F: So you used to have vegetables, and vegetable soup you probably made.

M: Yes, we ate a lot of that. We didn't do too bad with the eating. At Christmas time when my husband was working at the U. S. Steel, he had a lot of friends there. That was all during the Depression. Some of the men had the good jobs and this one man was a neighbor of ours. At Christmas time, this one department wanted to give what they had to just one person. So they decided to give it to Bill. We had an awful lot of stuff given to us. Ham and groceries and fruit.

F: Oh, really? This was right from the guys from U. S. Steel?

M: Yes. And I'll never forget this either: There was another relative of ours that stayed in Grove City awhile. His wife was related to us. He was married once before but had a son from his first marriage. They decided to come and stay over at our place for awhile. They were over there and they stayed at our place for weeks and ate up pretty near all our groceries we had! (laughter) It's funny now, but it wasn't so funny then. I often thought, honest to goodness, we didn't have anything ourself and they knew we had those groceries and they came up! And I remember we had the ham and everything and then poor Bill got sick over it. He was sick anyway--he had tonsillitis and he couldn't eat. He could when he got better and the stuff was about all gone.

- F: What about the kids as far as Christmas?
- M: The neighbors were awfully good.
- F: Were there any toys or gifts at Christmas in the home?
- M: They got toys, I know, every Christmas but not during the Depression. His mother was working for a family up in Ohio here in a little town, [Andover]. She used to get them things. I remember one time on the son's birthday--it was his sixth birthday--his grandmother wanted to go over to the daughter that lived over in the country. We had to get up early and take her to the station. That was his sixth birthday. We had a little bit of money that time. I don't know whether that was during the Depression. No, I don't think so, I think that was before the Depression.

Anyway, I remember about him [with] one of these little airplanes and I have a picture of it yet. My daughter was three years older than him. She was always harder to do with than the boy. Everything was always all right with him but not Catherine. She got everything. She was the oldest and she sure saw that she got it, too. (laughter)

I don't know how that was about that house. I think that Bill was working then. Oh, yes. He was working for quite awhile when we moved into that house.

- F: Were there kids coming around during the Depression trick or treating on Halloween?
- M: Oh, yes. They came there. I guess they got their share. I don't know. I don't remember much about Halloween. I guess Bill was working then. They wouldn't get anything when he wasn't because we didn't have anything ourselves. (laughter) Only what was given to us.
- F: What would you say, it was a pretty tough time living then?
- M: Oh, it was, really. But I often wonder if a person can go through all those times like that.
- F: How you did it.

M: But you know what? Some people had worse times. They had deaths in their families and everything and a lot of sickness and then that was even worse. The city had a doctor they would send out. We had to send several times for a doctor for Bill because after he was out of the service for the first years he never was well. He got so many colds and tonsillitis and things like that.

F: This doctor from the city, was that for free?

M: Yes. We didn't have to pay for that.

F: But was that limited or restricted to certain people?

M: No, I don't think so. I think you had to call up and then they'd send somebody out. I remember once I got real sick and they had a doctor, he was a colored man, but he looked white. You wouldn't have ever known it. They used to call him Red.

They sent him out. I had a sore throat, but whatever he gave me, I was well the next morning. He was a good doctor. I'd never forget that. And I was really sick.

I know this other doctor that they sent out. He always helped Bill, too. That wasn't too bad about the doctor. We had a dentist since the Depression was over and he came out to the house to make Bill's teeth. He goes to the same church we do and his dad was a dentist for years. He's dead now, but the young man followed his profession.

F: Followed his father's footsteps, yes.

M: He said at one time his dad would go to work up to the office and he'd come home, maybe he had made a dollar. That's all people could pay him.

I know one time Catherine, the little girl, had something done with her tooth, I don't know whether it was pulled or what. I think it was pulled. The dentist said to Bill, "Do you have any money?" Bill said, "I have one dollar." So he gave him the dollar. And that's about [it] sometimes to get only one dollar--dentists. So they weren't . . .

F: Making a lot of money, yes.

- M: Not only the poor people.
- F: Was there any other way instead of money being passed, was there trading things?
- M: We never had any money given to us. Only from some relatives of ours that had some.
- F: Do you remember as far as some of the other people instead of paying money for a service or something that they would trade?
- M: No. But you know what they did? Oh, I must tell you this: They had somebody come out to your house to inspect. You had to put your name in if you wanted any groceries or stamps or whatever it was, and they would send somebody out. We had a piano in those days; we couldn't bring it over here because we had no room for it, and my husband had a guitar. And they came in and they said, "You have a piano, you have a guitar," and they as much as said you ought to sell that.

They had soup kitchens. One day the lady came out and she said, "You ought to go and work in the soup kitchen." I said, "That's what you think. I never went to the soup kitchen and I'm not going to work for you." My legs were bad. I have bad legs now. I have arthritis real bad and I had varicose veins. I said, "Give my husband the job. He's dying to get a job. Why should I go and work in the soup kitchen and him not having a job." I told her right off, I said I wouldn't do it. And I didn't. I didn't care. I never went in their soup kitchen. No. They expected you to. You weren't supposed to have anything.

- F: This came out after Roosevelt with the groceries and food stamps, or was this kind of a local thing?
- M: Things were brighter after he got in. It was [with] Hoover that things went bad, but they say it wasn't his fault. He wasn't allowed to do things. That's what I understand: that he wasn't as bad as what people made out.

But they say that the aftereffects of Roosevelt weren't too good either. They had these projects. My husband would get a little job for that. One time I know, he worked for Meander Dam. He was out there in the cold and the wet and the mud and every-

thing. He said it was bad on his health but he did it anyway. The man next door had charge of that and he got him that little job.

F: Did he get involved with this WPA, [Works Progress Administration]?

M: Yes. Those were the projects, different ones, yes. I forgot the names of those. Yes, they had that. Roosevelt did that and that helped a lot. Oh, I'm telling you, that was a mess. You can't hardly believe it. Now Catherine--that's my daughter, she belongs to a club--says she has told things that happened. She was older and she said that they won't even believe it: that you had done without gas and done without electric and all that.

When they shut the water off, that was something that my husband couldn't take. (laughter) Boy, he fooled him that time! I don't know how that happened, but I've never forgotten that! Oh, I know how he told Elmer to be sure and pump that thing down there in the cellar, and it worked out all right. The old fellow went home satisfied he had shut it off! (laughter) It might have been wrong, but I'm glad it happened anyway. I don't know what we'd have done without the water.

F: Do you think there's any one lesson that you learned from the Depression? Was there anything that you really thought after you were looking back at the Depression now that was probably really bad?

M: I don't know. I know we were bad off, but I know one thing: We had a lot of friends. I know that and they helped us a lot with groceries and things sometimes. I remember one time, too, that we got some groceries from our minister. He had been there and I guess he just was out trying to find out how bad off we were. Pretty soon then, a truck came and had quite a bit of groceries in it. I remember I wanted some ham so bad and I was sitting there in our kitchen one day and I was wishing I had some ham and here there was a ham and cabbage in that order! (laughter) And that's what happened.

F: I guess when times get tough, you find out who your friends really are.

M: Oh, we did. Of course, some of the men as I said

had better jobs. It was sort of a political thing, too. Some of them did get it for that reason. And maybe get you an order once in awhile.

F: What do you mean by a political reason? If we give you the groceries, then you vote on my side?

M: It depends on whether a Republican's in or Democrat. You're a Democrat or you're a Republican. If you're a Republican and you had Republican-felt friends, why you get maybe more.

F: Did they ever ask you to come out and vote for certain people during that time?

M: No. Only through the mail. No, I don't think I'm even going to vote this year. I don't know who I want to vote for. I don't think I'm going to vote at all. (laughter) I don't know.

F: I want to thank you very much for giving me this interview tonight.

M: I hope it did you some good.

F: Oh, it certainly did. Thank you. I appreciate it.

M: I didn't know whether I could tell you enough.

F: Oh, you did. You really have.

M: Maybe there were some things I left out. But the saddest part of it all was when we had to leave our house. My husband felt so bad because it was my money I had, that I had left and put in the house and he didn't want me to do it. I said, "What's mine is yours and I want a house." And that's what happened. But that was all uncalled for because, twenty-seven hundred dollars, we could have paid for that and that Depression was about getting over. That was the latter part of it. As I said, a man got that and I know we could have paid for it because when we moved into that terrace on the east side, the rent was cheap there, but we paid it.

After the Depression there were still some hard times. People sometimes didn't get all their days in. There were about three families in that terrace that owed them about three, four hundred dollars. The man who owned it died and another owner took it

over. He came to check on what everybody owed. There was one man who had steady work, but he owed quite a little bit, too. I don't know, he drank a good bit and didn't get along very good with his wife. He took note of all this but they never bothered us. We never paid that. Never asked us to. It was about three hundred dollars we owed.

F: That's really something. (Tape turns off)

Do you want to just repeat that once what you talked about--the soap?

M: My husband was going downtown to get some things, groceries and all, a few things. I had this extra dime and I said, "You get me some soap. I have to have some soap to wash the clothes." He went down and he got the stuff, but he didn't have the soap. He had a pound of hamburger instead.

F: And what did he say when you asked him about that?

M: He said, "We have to eat." He said he can't eat the soap! I went down and I made the soap. I guess I got it a little bit too strong. You have to be careful with that homemade soap. My hands got kind of sore, too, but I got the washing done and I got the kids off to Sunday school.

F: So you made your own soap?

M: Yes. Oh, I had a lot of nice soap.

F: This ends the interview with Rose Morton. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW